THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) There are no ill effects of reservations, as they bring about greater equity and inclusiveness in access to higher education. There is a decision 'in principle' to retain seats available outside reservation at present level, while implementing reservations so that the over all availability of seats in increased.

(b) and (c) An Oversight Gommittee has been constituted along with five working groups, to make necessary assessments in this regard.

Mauda Thermal Power Plant in Nagpur

*16. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to refer to the answer to Starred Question 275 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 9th March, 2006 and state:

(a) whether Government have since revisited the issue relating to setting up of 1000 MW coal-based Mauda Thermal Power Plant in Nagpur; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE): (a) and (b) In the course of identification of power projects for NTPC's capacity addition programme, a site near Mauda, considering its proximity to coalmines of Western Coal Fields Ltd., was identified as one of the prospective sites in Nagpur District of Maharasthra. However, the mines identified for supply of coal to the project in Wardha Valley Coal Fields were found to be of very small capacities and scattered over a large area. Therefore, linkage of coal for the project was granted from lb Valley of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. (MCL) in Orissa, located about 600 Kms. away. Consequently, the cost of coal transportation works out to be about Rs. 585 per tonne, resulting increase of the cost of power by about 45 paise/Kwh. Thus, economic ranking of Mauda Thermal Power Project did not compare favourably with NTPC's proposed pit-head based integrated Mega power project in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh with a capacity of 4000 MW for meeting the power requirement of the Western Region beneficiaries including Maharashtra.

However, due to acute shortage of power in Western Region in general and Maharashtra in particular, the Ministry of Power held detailed discussions with NTPC and it has been decided that NTPC would revisit

the issue and examine the feasibility of setting up of Mauda power project using coal from lb valley and discuss with the beneficiary states, which would be willing to buy power at the rate at which this project will be able to offer.

In the process, NTPC has initiated action for preparation of Feasibility Report (FR) of the project based on lb-Valley coal to establish its techno-economic viability. After the FR is prepared, NTPC would approach the beneficiaries to seek their consent to buy power from this project. Ministry of Power has also requested Ministry of Coal to provide coal linkage from a nearby coal mines.

Drug abuse in North-East

*17. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a report of the United Nations released recently, has said that drug abuse in North-Eastern India, especially among the youth is a cause for worry;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken to prevent drug abuse in North-East?

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MEIRA KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The report indicates that since the 1970s, the pattern of drug use amongst local youth in North-Eastern States has changed from age ojd tradition of cannabis and opium use to heroin smoking, followed by injecting heroin and that many young males and females being drug use by directly injecting as opposed to the traditional route which involved non-injecting. Gradually emphasis is shifting from heroin to synthetic drugs like dextropropxyphene taken through injections.

(c) The Ministry is implementing the Scheme for Prevention of Alcoholism and Substance (Drug) Abuse wherein non-governmental organisations are provided financial support for awareness programmes, counseling, treatment after care and rehabilitation services in varied settings such as the community, workplace, educational institutions, prisons, etc. Presently, 46 de-addiction centres and 8 counseling centres are functioning in the North East for this purpose.